SEVEN

Resignifying Traditional Festive Culture for Progressive Ends in Portugal from Dictatorship to Democracy

Associativism and the Production of Protest

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The marchers paraded down Lisbon's Avenida da Liberdade, the central thoroughfare of Portugal's capital city. As is common in Portuguese folk processions, the parade included local brass, percussion, and wind bands; folklore dancers and singers; accordion music; and sundry interpretive floats representing elements of Portuguese traditional festive culture. Invited by the organizers to perform at the march was Farra Fanfarra, a community-based brass band and civil society organization from Sintra, located in the coastal countryside outside of Lisbon. As Farra Fanfarra played its arrangement of "Grândola, Vila Morena," a beloved Portuguese song from the Alentejo region associated with the country's Carnation Revolution, thousands lined the streets and marched, dancing and clapping to the music, waving Portuguese flags, and holding up banners as the procession followed its route toward Lisbon's largest and most recognized public square. Television programs, social media sites, and newspapers circulated sounds and images of the parade to the public. Such parades usually attract thousands of spectators who enjoy the pageantry, listen to the bands, and watch the creative displays. The qualities of performances are later hotly debated in cafés, bars, and internet discussion groups.[1]

Traditional social practices like the one described above are part of a ritual complex called *cultura popular,* or popular culture; they occur frequently during the year throughout Portugal as a ubiquitous element of annual ritual cycles central to sociocultural life. These parades processing through communities (called in different contexts *desfiles*, *cortejos*, *procissões*, and *marchas populares*), as well as related forms of festive behavior including social gatherings such as the *festa*

(free festive events in public spaces), are ritualized manifestations of and spaces for the production of cultura popular. In the context of Portuguese traditional festive practices, cultura popular is distinguished from the Anglophone concept of popular culture—a mass-mediated phenomenon embedded in global marketing and capitalist production—and instead refers to local folkloric culture. Furthermore, in Portuguese sociocultural rituals, musical practices at the festa differ from those taking place at a *music festival*, especially as the term is used in English, generally referring to a series of performances or concerts that, in the context of what this book terms *festival activism*, can serve to promote a particular political view. In Portugal, the festa is a concept in which cultura popular, or traditional festive behavior, and locally produced festival practices are parts of longstanding, culturally embedded sociocultural processes of community gathering, belonging, and reinforcing of networks of reciprocity.

Moreover, cultura popular is not only defined by specific forms of ritualized cultural expression but is also related to how these forms are (re)produced. They are generated by community-based organizations of artists, musicians, performers and community members called *associações* (associations), often acting in the role of or serving as representatives of particular neighborhoods or communities at urban and translocal events. The elemental institutions for the broader social practice of *associativismo* (associativism), these non-profit voluntary associations are most frequently based in the local communities in which the marches take place, and they provide the structural capacities to organize such events. Around Portugal, multiple ritual cycles of celebration throughout the year involve processions down a city or village's central roadway, including spring/summer socioreligious and secular festival cycles, village patron saint days, municipal and national civic celebrations, and ambulatory concerts by Portuguese *filarmónica* (philharmonic) bands. This chapter shows how such organizations organize traditional cultural practices, resignifying them for progressive political ends.

Indeed, the ethnographic vignette of Portuguese cultura popular above depicts a particular marcha from 2011. It has elements that are similar to other traditional processions but stands apart, as the parade did not take place within the ritual space of a socioreligious or secularized annual life-cycle event. The parade was, instead, an activist protest, part of the massive public upheaval accompanying the Portuguese government's response to the global financial crisis. Adapting vocabularies of traditional folk performance, however, the protestors relied on ritual expressions of cultura popular as a com-

mon vocabulary for itinerant musical activism. Further, this protest action not only adapted performative modes typical to popular parades but also relied on a network of cultural and musical associations.

These state-chartered civic institutions have their origins in the nineteenth century and were heavily regulated during the Portuguese Estado Novo dictatorship (1933–1974), which used the organizations to promote cultura popular for right-wing propaganda. Following the Carnation Revolution on April 25, 1974, when a military coup ended the dictatorship and leftist political factions determined the outcome of Portugal's constitutional democracy, the institution of the association was revitalized. The organizations are now central vehicles for citizens to produce culture and engage socially and politically, with many participating in progressive causes and promoting alternative cultural practices.

Emerging from a twentieth-century right-wing, Christian-nationalist dictatorship, Portugal's integration into the European Union, beginning in 1986, has transformed over recent decades the country's political orientation and economic standing, broadly influencing cultural expressions, including those of the associations. Yet despite these new power reconfigurations, activist musical performance, protest festivals, and festive behavior continue to use older performative vocabularies. Further, festas, popular parades and processions, village celebrations, and other traditional ritualized cultural practices have become staples in political contexts, where they have been adapted by local populations to gain agency and negotiate the outcomes of state and municipal governmental policy within a paradigm of twenty-first-century EU integration.

Creative Adaptation of Cultural Forms as an Alternative to Creative Destruction

The semiotics of festival protest activism need not only rely on ruptures with and critiques of traditional forms. Tracing the historical evolution of musical and cultural association practices in different pre- and postrevolutionary contexts, this chapter explores adaptations of community-based music-making such as the popular parade and village festa. Emerging from socioreligious traditions, cultura popular was co-opted and in part invented by the reactionary right-wing dictatorship as a foil against progressive movements and liberal sociocultural transformation. Drawing on historical precedent and contemporary articulations of traditional cultural practices, the examples in

this chapter demonstrate how ritual vocabularies and performative elements of traditional cultura popular and festive culture have been used by activists to create sonic and social spaces for political advocacy, local civic engagement, and democratic participation. Despite the progressive content of protests and alternative forms of music making frequently also on display, traditional festive culture provides a powerful semiotic frame effective at influencing political action and social behavior.

Vocabularies of political protest music and other artistic performances at social activist festivals are often analyzed in terms of "creative dissent" (Langdon, Jackson, and Kitcher 2020, 167), using activist pedagogies to change ideas or behaviors for progressive goals (Moro 2017; Galloway 2014; Campaign Choirs 2019). Unlike examples discussed in this chapter, progressive festival activism in these contexts is understood as rupturing, shocking, or "dislocating social norms," as Facchini (2011, 146) describes in a discussion of feminism in São Paulo's rock scene. This literature includes studies of progressive activism in which musical performances create utopic, idealized "emancipatory spaces for social change" (Lelea and Voiculesco 2017, 807; see also Davy 2010) for marginalized identities and, in a related context, "'sonic and social spaces'" that challenge norms and promote community transformation by providing a frame where "'disparate identity-formations, cultures and geographies historically kept and mapped separately are allowed to interact with each other'" (Moehn 2007, 183–84 citing Kun 2005, 23; see also Muna 2017). At the heart of such analyses is a presumption that progressive activist intent challenges and transforms mainstream norms and expectations for cultural production, social organization, and identity expression.

The progressive movements described in these and other studies point to important strategies of resistance for marginalized positions, organizations, and identities. Such approaches require challenging and transforming political hierarchies simultaneously with norms of behavior to confront power processes responsible for deprecation, oppression, and alienation. In these cases, progressive activism relies on creative and invented forms of performance that rupture traditional expectations of musical display while challenging a restrictive social order. I am sympathetic with these positions in my examination of vocabularies of protest. Indeed, these performative frames characterized some elements of festival activism in Portugal since prior to the dissolution of the dictatorship. Through the 1970s revolutionary

period, for example, there occurred backlash against traditional cultural forms viewed as associated with the Estado Novo, including disparagement of the musical societies responsible for performances at state monitored and approved concerts and festivals. As discussed in this chapter, however, even among those who sought to rupture traditional expectations with their activism, traditional cultural forms were often integrated in protest activities.

Nonetheless, expressions of festival activism in present-day Portugal demonstrate that the aesthetic choices, communicative strategies, and organizational structure of these contemporary rearticulations of traditional forms belie oppositional antagonisms.[2] In this context, creative protest is undertaken not so much by tearing down social norms but rather by repurposing traditional folk performative frames to communicate progressive aims—strategies that can conciliate objections among the public at large. The performances link political activism expressed with expanding expectations of public music performance in twenty-first-century, EU-integrated Portugal with protest vocabularies, practices, and strategies established during the dictatorship and its aftermath.

Reviving traditional, folk-based cultural forms in the service of leftist social causes is not unique to Portugal; it characterizes aspects of Brazilian *música popular brasileira* (MPB), Latin American *nueva canción*, and Portuguese *música de intervenção* (protest song), among other folk-based protest musics of the twentieth century. What makes these Portuguese cases discussed in this chapter distinct is that they do not only meld folk-inspired music to leftist lyrics but rather adopt the frame of traditional ritualized festive practices and the local, community-based social context in which these cultural practices are embedded for protest purposes. By privileging and finding novel ways of performing using traditional cultural forms, postrevolution and contemporary associative music practices in Portugal that were controlled by the dictatorship continue to create norm-rupturing sonic and social spaces that challenge political hierarchies. However, they rely on and work within a performative frame that generally supports expectations of traditional folk cultural and musical practices.

Unfolding chronologically, this analysis of traditional, festive cultura popular and semiotics of protest performance in Portugal encompasses historical examples from the dictatorship era to the contemporary period. It elucidates how Portuguese cultura popular has been intertwined with activist protest in

both subtle and confrontational ways; how associations that organize protests and provide music for activist causes creatively adapt cultura popular; and how contemporary protest activities have synthesized cultura popular and traditional performative frames to address political and economic pressures of twenty-first-century EU integration.

To summarize, this analysis advances several key arguments:

1. Closely associated for centuries with socioreligious festivals but now largely secularized, ritualized street parades and the village festa have been adapted for progressive political activist projects in Portugal. While not generally understood as music festivals, these manifestations of cultura popular are nonetheless part of the cultural complex of festas, a related element of traditional festive behavior. Cultura popular is defined beyond the expressive form and depends on the local, community-based institutions that produce them, and specific kinds of musical performances are always part of these events. Adapting these forms, activists use traditional festive culture to further progressive goals.
2. These kinds of protest performances have emerged through a decades-long reclamation of cultura popular from the Portuguese Estado Novo corporatist-fascist dictatorship and its efforts to control public performance. Indeed, contrary to the dictatorship's propaganda program, contemporary activists' progressive aims have bolstered older cultural forms to celebrate difference and forge creative adaptations of global musical styles.
3. Historically, state-chartered civil society organizations have been elemental to the structuring of social life in Portugal. Contemporary iterations of these cultural associations have taken on a critical organizational, discursive, and performative role in political activism. Historical precedents, such as local, community-based Portuguese filarmónica bands and folklore groups, have provided a basis for recent alternative iterations of cultural and musical associations, including community-based alternative brass and wind bands. Using the performative model accompanying traditional parades and village festas and the cultural complex in which these events are embedded allows activists to perform alternative repertoires where they can effectively teach, inform, and transform local communities and larger audiences—without rupturing expectations for the public display of cultura popular.
4. In this context, the role of music in activist causes involves more than musical styles, lyrics, and performances and is related to how presentations are situated in the traditional ritual complex of popular

parades and festas organized by community associations. Occupying a similar central community role as older (historically more conservative or reactionary) iterations, progressive cultural associations, by facilitating members' political activism, have helped to bring about social transformation. The structural role of these organizations, their close relationship to the public, and their centrality providing opportunities for members to participate in public life and democratic processes situate progressive associations in an influential position to advocate for political causes.

5. In considering festas in Portugal, this article expands notions of what constitutes festival activism by incorporating a broader complex of cultural production in the service of political aims, showing how, in a context of social rupture brought on by EU integration, traditional cultural forms and festive behavior can play a role in promoting activist causes.

Estado Novo Control and the Subtleties of Musical Protest

Musical and festival activism do not, of course, solely advocate progressive and liberal goals of expanding equality. Festivals can also advance reactionary adoptions of cultural practices intended to support state regimes or privileged social hierarchies within and "outside of the festival arena" (Gilman 2017; Stoeltje 1993, 135–56).

As part of its propaganda agenda, the Estado Novo developed programs and marshalled authoritarian state resources to adapt, control, promote, and even invent "traditional" popular cultural practices. Framing and promoting cultura popular as an expression of premodern, agrarian social life, the regime's propaganda apparatus attempted to thwart the use of music as a vehicle of protest. These efforts restricted various forms of musical production, including urban fado (the country's national genre), and were acutely directed at the musical associations that taught and performed traditional folk music, dance, and brass music (filarmónicas). Furthermore, requirements for musicians to limit their production to forms of expression deemed acceptable by the regime were policed by local officers, informants, and state violence through not only censorship of critical lyrics but also the repurposing of religious processions, which were channeled into state-sanctioned popular parades and exhibitions. To this end, the authoritarian state established rules for venues, festivals, uniforms, performance style, and set lists, monitoring and restricting the activities of folkloric music ensembles organized by the regime (*rancho folclóricos*) as well as local filarmónica associations (Holton 2005).

Yet the relationship between these reactionary efforts to limit artistic freedom, censor cultural production, and discourage protest against the regime were met with complex responses on the part of musicians, many of whom pushed past the boundaries of acceptable lyrics, venues, and repertoires. The members of musical and cultural associations were largely acquiescent to the state's limitations, but, in their negotiations over accepting or rejecting these restrictions, resistance occurred. Kimberly Holton (2005), citing João Vasconcellos (2001), points out that even research by ranchos folclóricos that uncovered earlier styles of dress and dance "considered less important than or potentially corrosive to the cannons of nationalistic rhetoric" were effectively a form of resistance (60). Familiarity with state rules and restrictions meant that conscious deviations from this frame, no matter how minor, could communicate opposition to state power. Musicians researching and favoring nonconformist performative choices point to intricacies in festival activist practices in which engaging in traditional practices need not be antithetical to pushing back against hierarchical systems of reactionary power. These forms of resistance continued in the postrevolutionary period when many rancho ethnographers researched, recuperated, and mounted festival presentations of styles banned by the Estado Novo censorship apparatus (Holton 2005, 59–87). Such precedents demonstrate how the recovery of what artists and communities considered to be traditional forms could serve progressive ends when expressed as part of well-understood ritual vocabularies.

Estado Novo–era ranchos folclóricos were not expressions of radical protest comparable to the movements of progressive musicians, some of whom directly challenged the regime in more confrontational ways. The singers of música de intervenção (protest song) during the final years of the Portuguese dictatorship undertook more direct critiques of the state and its oppressive practices. Indeed, many of the musicians who engaged in radical protest intended to create ruptures with the regime considered the ranchos to be antithetical to progressive and anti-authoritarian aims (Côrte-Real 1996). Nonetheless, activist musicians in Portugal needed to be cautious, often expressing contempt for the regime in subtle ways, as performers were forced to adhere to what could be safely put past state censors. Failing to do so resulted in the state's censorship apparatus banning artists' creative work and the state police harassing and attacking them. As a result, even among radical dissidents, traditional cultural practices were synthesized to communicate progressive goals.

Synthesizing Traditional Performative Forms with Global Protest Movements

Protest through musical performance was an intrinsic part of public expressions of popular activism and the uprising leading to the 1974 coup. The adaptation and mimesis of cultura popular tropes in activist musical festivals in contemporary Portugal were linked to folk musicians who had a prominent cultural role dissenting against the dictatorship. Like current protest practices in contemporary EU-integration Portugal, during the late dictatorship era a cultural protest vocabulary developed in dialogue with voices outside the country as international anticolonial discourse informed revolutionary political activism. When the country opened to formerly censored and outlawed forms of musical and artistic expression during the volatile postrevolutionary period, musical performance assisted efforts to reclaim institutions and grapple with the end of the regime, including musical genres developing from mass migration from former colonies.

Musical performance of traditional repertoires has been an indelible part of Portuguese political activist vocabularies. The most notable example is from the April 25, 1974 Carnation Revolution, when the radio broadcast of Zeca Afonso's "Grândola, Vila Morena," a well-known leftist protest song that had been performed at music festivals and public events, signaled officers and troops to put the coup into motion. Although the song is not itself a traditional tune, the structure of melodic lines and choral arrangement are related to polyphonic *cante alentejano*, an agricultural community musical expression of the Alentejo region.

Defining and constructing tradition through specific rural cultural practices were hallmarks of dictatorship propaganda used to advance an antimodernity narrative. This song, which has since been referred to as the national hymn of the revolution, was, however, the literal call to arms signaling the opposition's advance against the regime. Today, "Grândola" remains a national song of protest with a sacred place in Portuguese cultural memory, performed annually at revolutionary commemorations and intermittently in diverse public settings as a general political protest anthem. Public performances of the song were especially prevalent during leftist protests over the Portuguese government's response to the global financial crisis, including the protest marches described in this chapter.

Enjoying mythic stature in the public consciousness, this protest song was nonetheless only one element in an increasingly heated decade of protest

music leading to the overthrow of Estado Novo rule. Reprisals in the form of state-sanctioned violence and imprisonment were common. Yet music festivals and public performances toward the end of the dictatorship provided popular activists with a microphone to protest policies—even as critiques were generally coded to defy censors and evade the state police (PIDE/DGS). Activist music festival performance in Portugal took inspiration from other Western anticolonial protests of the 1960s, notably in the US and France. Yet through the postrevolutionary period, even as dialogue with the music of international revolutionary anticolonial movements was of central influence, protest performances and festivals were nonetheless threaded with popular Portuguese musical forms.

Social scientist João Sarmento (2007) points out that summertime festivals before and after the revolution—including Vilar de Mouros, Paredes de Coura, and others—expanded dialogue between Portugal and the international community, assisting the country in its nascent democratization project. Founded in 1965 during the dictatorship, Vilar de Mouros was initially a regional folklore festival. As Sarmento points out, the festival took on an increasingly dissident character and became a site contesting the regime's authority. In 1968, for example, Vilar de Mouros included musicians who were outspoken against the Estado Novo, including Zeca Afonso, composer of "Grândola, Vila Morena." Later dictator-era editions of "the first modern music festival in Portugal" (Sarmento 2007, 13) attracted thirty thousand spectators and showcased international performers. The symbolism of Elton John's theatrical 1971 act, for example, flew in the face of the regime's rigidity and austerity. Moreover, the event was explicitly presented as a modern, countercultural festival. Indeed, state authorities perceived the festival as a protest event. An undercover secret police agent at the 1971 festival reported on what he described as illegal actions and moral transgressions, including widespread drug use, sexual openness (including homoeroticism), antigovernment attitudes, and anticolonial and antiregime rhetorical stances (some coming from the stage), with the band Manfred Mann called out as a subversive revolutionary influence (cited in Encarnação 2019, 100).

These events, despite providing clear examples of cultural dissidence expressed at the festival, took place in a protest frame that tried to harmonize modernism and more traditional musical forms. Of relevance to this analysis, the festival was not created explicitly to protest the regime and had, in fact, evolved from a showcase for traditional folk music. Earlier editions, for

example, featured state-sanctioned performances of Portuguese folk artists including the world-renowned, regime-promoted fadista Amália Rodrigues; even the National Republican Guard's brass band performed. In the subtle game to evade state police censors, the foundation of the festival—not as a site of revolutionary social practice but as a celebration of state-approved regional and national folklife—established a performative frame to facilitate later activist musical performances.

Postrevolution activist critiques emerged as the population was politically unshackled from state restrictions and as traditional musicians opened repertoires to previously banned material. Transforming expectations for musical performance in democratic Portugal emerged as older, amateur-run festivals expanded their number of international acts. One major iteration of an activist music festival embodying how traditional forms could be adapted as part of an expressive vocabulary of protest is the Festa do Avante!, founded by the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) in 1976. The PCP's primary fundraising festival today, Avante! remains the country's largest political activist festival. The first edition took place in the midst of the tense and dangerous postrevolutionary period, as different factions jockeyed for influence, and democratic control over Portugal's political, cultural, and economic institutions had not yet been secured.

Initiated by communist leaders of the revolutionary movement, Avante! included speeches, organizational activities, and the presence of key insurgents like Ary dos Santos. The acclaimed "poet of the revolution," Santos wrote song lyrics for Amália Rodrigues, Chico Buarque, and Simone de Oliveira, who sang his words in "Desfolhada Portuguesa" (Portuguese defoliation), Portugal's 1969 Eurovision song contest entry (Felix 2010, 1178). The song is another example of how musicians in Portugal used traditional language and imagery in veiled attacks on the regime. Dos Santos's use of agricultural imagery, for example, helped the song skirt censors even as it described Portugal as "burning in the sun." Despite hewing to conservative folk culture, the lyrics could be taken as a subversive expression of protest against colonialism, state power, and the patriarchal dictatorship-era legal system condoning and normalizing domestic violence.

In the turbulent period after the dictatorship's overthrow, the Festa do Avante! was a force harnessing revolutionary protest music to leftist political factions. Indeed, Ary dos Santos, Zeca Afonso, and other luminaries of the cultural left were frequent performers. As with other revolution-era music

festivals, Festa do Avante! featured international acts including Max Roach, Chico Buarque, Kermit Ruffins, Dexy's Midnight Runner, Baden Powell, and Dixieland bands.[3] The number of international brass and wind bands is notable given the ubiquity and popular appeal of this kind of instrumentation in Portugal. The spotlight of the festival, however, has always been on Portuguese acts with diverse musical styles, including folk and cultura popular acts. Performances are part of a festival that sponsors workshops, hosts political speeches, and showcases informational booths with representatives from communist, progressive, and leftist party affiliations.

The festival is more than a gathering of the party faithful or rededication to first principles harkening back to the revolutionary generation. It is modeled on the form of a popular village festa or, more specifically, an *arraial*, a festive occupation of public space. As a fundraiser, Avante! takes place in a restricted concert space and charges an entry fee, unlike a festa popular, which is free and held in a public square. Nonetheless, the event evokes a village festa and shares many structural and performative elements with socioreligious or municipal festivals. For example, since 1981, a highlight of the Avante! festival has been a popular parade. Presented as political theater, the procession is modeled on socioreligious festive marches supported by civil society associations. Along with stages for international and national acts, there is a stage showcasing filarmónica bands, ranchos folclóricos, and community-based traditional music forms. Avante! presents an image of Portugal as a broad cross section of *camaradas* (comrades, as festivalgoers performatively call one another) represented by diverse contemporary acts mixed with traditional performances that participate in this adaptation of a traditional ritual complex using a performative vocabulary expressing political content.

Community Music Making, Alternative Associations, and Political Activism

Reliance on cultura popular elements goes beyond ritual performance, however, and is also expressed in the ways the performances are produced, adapted, and embedded in the cultural complex of the Portuguese communitarian civic associations. Historically, chartered cultural and civic organizations have been responsible for organizing and coordinating with state institutions and musical societies to mount cultura popular social events. Today, half of the population participates, directly or indirectly, in over thirty thousand associations (Monteiro 2018), providing members with a direct means

of agency to engage civil society, while structuring society-wide funding for and organization of cultural production. Lahusen sees civil society organizations and associativism in general as a generative force for "institutionalizing related action forms, social roles, collective objectives, and identities" (2006, 121). Given the nature of their activities, musical, cultural, and arts societies are among the most prominent, visible, and, arguably, beloved of these organizations.

Contemporary iterations of these civil society associations are likewise key organizers of political activist protests, collaborating with other civic organizations, alternative brass bands, and folk ensembles. Activist music festivals are often organized by such associations, such as the annual Festa da Diversidade (Festa of Diversity) co-organized by the activist SOS Racismo association, and the Pride Lisboa Arraial and Marcha Orgulho LGBTI+ (Lisbon Pride March) organized by ILGA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Intervention) and other progressive associations. Even referring to the latter event as an arraial signals the reappropriation of popular festa culture, and, indeed, the Pride Lisboa Arraial music festival has become a part of the Festas de Lisboa program of official events in the city's annual summertime festa cycle. Likewise, the Festa de Diversidade is co-organized by Lisbon City Hall as part of the Festas de Lisboa, with the *Lisbon Cultural Agenda* referring to the event as a festa for "marginalized associations and artists."[4] Adaptations of the association organizing model as venues for political protest facilitate activists' ability to speak for and to the communities represented. These progressive associations and bands make them structurally similar to older community-based cultural societies. This resemblance not only speaks to the adaptation of traditional performative forms as part of protest communication in festival activism but also reflects how organizers rely on popular sociocultural institutions that organize and structure community life as the medium to produce their activist performances.

For example, alternative community-based brass bands have been prominent participants in Portuguese protest marches in recent decades, and they are also organized as association. A Portuguese expression of the global alternative brass band movement (Snyder 2022; Snyder, Allen, and Garofalo 2020), these ensembles composed of woodwinds, brass, and percussion feature lively, innovative performance styles with eclectic global and national repertoires. On the one hand, their repertoire and performative styles may make the bands appear to have departed from the filarmónica tradition from

which they emerged. Yet a consideration of the operations of the alternative band associations and their highly regarded roles within local communities shows that they in many ways build on traditional organizing forms of Portuguese associations (Moniz 2020; Moniz and Snyder forthcoming). The alternative bands' community-based roles are directly shaped by the filarmónica tradition, in which most alternative brass musicians were trained and enculturated in the community-based music ensembles. Like the filarmónica bands, alternative brass bands are, with few exceptions, coordinated as and supported by voluntary musical civil society organizations based in a particular village.

The articles of incorporation of both filarmónicas and alternative brass bands charge them with carrying out specified cultural, economic, and political activities. Founded to support the public good, their status allows the collectives to earn money and makes them eligible to compete for state-level funds. As of 2018, an estimated seven hundred filarmónica bands/societies in Portugal were spread throughout rural and urban areas (Pinto and Figueiras 2018, 119; Granjo 2020, 57), and are also prominent in Portuguese immigrant settlements (Brucher 2013; Niemesto 2020). Filarmónicas are essential sources of local musical instruction and have an amplified social and cultural role in their communities, where they are central to music performance at local socioreligious events, festas populares, and municipal events. The important local roles of community-based brass and wind bands have been examined extensively (Castelo-Branco and Lima 1998; Finnegan 1989; DuBois, Méon, and Pierru 2013; Reily and Brucher 2013; Pestana et al. 2020). Their associations are social and cultural hubs in rural and urban communities, sponsoring not only concerts but also dinners, fundraisers, and workshops. They often share a close relationship with other important community institutions including churches, *juntas de freguesia* (the smallest elected local administrative unit), the armed forces, and community centers. In some rural Portuguese villages, the filarmónica society is itself the primary public community center. Filarmónicas and other music associations encompass a cross section of ages and social classes, including individuals who have respected social roles within communities.

Alternative brass bands, first appearing in the mid-1990s and numbering around fifty today, are a small but growing number compared to the filarmónicas, yet they have come to occupy a similar social role in local communities as their more traditional counterparts. Considering the heightened

role of community wind bands in structuring social transformation in local contexts, alternative brass bands and other bands supported by associative cultural organizations derive political influence and persuasive social cachet from this central community role. Alternative brass bands and other creative progressive cultural associations are deeply engaged in local community life, ensuring that their activities are part of broader social justice efforts, whether directly articulated through activist festival participation or in more subtle public performances throughout the year. The progressive associations of the alternative bands coordinate, launch, and collaborate in protest actions, including activist parades and popular festas.

The alternative bands' participation in activist musical protests during the contemporary period of EU integration show that musical performance has supported progressive social transformation while mobilizing rather than abandoning local popular cultural forms. A general revitalization of associativism has emerged since EU integration at the turn of the millennium, with a newer generation relying on associativism as a form of community civic engagement. In part, this revitalization has resulted from democratic Portugal's financial and logistical support of chartered civic and cultural societies by granting funding to the organizations to provide popular services as well as to design and carry out cultural policy initiatives. Associativist participation further increased as a result of the EU political and cultural integration project, notably the expansion of the Schengen area. EU integration has increased funds for cultural and musical associations to design and participate in international and local exchange projects and performances that promote European integration with progressive social agendas. Indeed, many alternative brass bands and their musicians have been ardent supporters of progressive social movements and causes and have participated in EU cultural integration programs that put them in collaboration with other progressive associations around Europe (Moniz 2020, 389–91; Moniz and Snyder forthcoming).

The reemergence of traditional forms like brass band associations in new guises has interestingly complicated many prognosticators of EU integration, which warned that integration would lead to a diminishment of local folkways in favor of broader, more homogenizing forms. A similar assumption underpins studies examining ruptures in cultural norms brought about by progressive political activism. These cultural and musical associations' activities challenge models that contemplate cultural circulation as part of an exported and hegemonic process by acting as a local manifestation of both

resistance and transformation, in which new global styles converge with and support preexisting forms. Indeed, the influence of alternative brass bands' performances in protest festas and festivals—synthesizing normative and often conservative expectations of cultural production with progressive messaging—is directly related to the structural role of community-based music associativism from which the bands emerged.

Indeed, in the twenty-first-century EU-integration era, alternative brass bands have often supplanted the performative role of filarmónicas in popular parades and village festas. This development reflects changing musical tastes but also points to how these musical projects are able to synthesize expansive repertoires and nontraditional performative elements into traditional frames that provide space for cultural transformation without being perceived as a threat to local lifeways. The centrality of such bands at activist festivals adopting popular cultural frames likewise supports political activism, as the progressive aims of organizers can be effectively communicated without seeming minacious.

Francisco "Kiko" Amorim, founder of the alternative brass groups Farra Fanfarra and Kumpania Algazarra and himself trained in a local filarmónica, has stated that an impetus for creating the bands was to participate in political causes (Moniz 2020, 383). The bands have performed at Avante! and are a staple of Lusophone music festivals, which, in postcolonial contexts, argue for a multiculturally, racially, and geographically diverse vision of Portuguese citizenship. They have been key participants in locally organized activist festivals and have performed in Lisbon in popular marcha-style parades and street protests. These events have included the massive Lisbon anti-austerity marches arising from the global financial crisis, antiglobalism and anticapitalism protests, peace initiatives, bio- and eco-sustainable festivals, and others. The alternative brass bands' participation underlines tensions between local cultural production and broader economic and political considerations (Baumann 2010; Miguel et al. 2011; Moniz 2020; Moniz and Snyder forthcoming).

Responding to political and economic transformations wrought by recent decades of EU integration, the bands engage in local, national, pan-EU, and global political issues, bringing cosmopolitan repertoire and performance styles to traditional spaces as part of community-based protest. Yet despite these characteristics, it is the musical performances by alternative brass bands and other rearticulations of folk traditions that allow protest marches to mirror older cultural festivals. While marching in protests and activist

commemorations along Lisbon's Avenida da Liberdade, for example, these bands walk the same route and occupy the same performative space as filarmónicas or other popular music and dance groups in secular and socioreligious popular processions. In such a performance context, alternative brass bands and folk groups add weight and legitimacy to the causes they support.

Contemporary protest movements involve musicians in ways that rely on the cultural power of these tropes to foment social change. Leftist representations of the symbols of the nation and nationalism, resulting from the prominence of left-wing revolutionaries in the coup that made democracy possible, make the expression of social protest a normalized part of civic participation. For example, the primary state celebration commemorating the fall of the dictatorship (the most relevant national celebration in contemporary Portugal) expresses nationalist patriotism in a protest march mimicking events of 1974. The Lisbon procession down the Avenida da Liberdade includes markers of state power like the military and police walking alongside progressive activist causes, unions, and groups supporting queer rights; social, racial, and economic justice causes; and other liberal civic aims. Filarmónica and alternative brass bands are ubiquitous at these commemorations in Lisbon and throughout Portugal. If one were to witness the parade without being aware of the date, one could easily think it was an activist protest march using popular culture forms rather than a state-sanctioned national commemoration.

Adapting Cultura Popular Performance and Political Action during Lisbon's Anti-austerity Movement

Contemporary ethnographic examples of protest activity in Portugal beginning in 2011 amid the global financial crisis demonstrate the prevalence and power of resignifying traditional frames for protest. The first local manifestations against governmental responses to the global financial crisis are often attributed to the Indignados and Movimiento 15-M (May 15) protests in Spain. Although not covered as widely in the international press, the massive Geração a Rasca (Generation at Risk) movement beginning on March 12, 2011, in Portugal, when marches in Lisbon, Porto, and other major cities brought the most people to a public protest since the 1974 revolution, preceded both protests in Spain. The movement also included an occupation of Lisbon's central Rossio Square well before the Occupy movement began in New York City. Progressive musical associations and alternative folk-traditional and brass musicians performed at all the Portuguese protests.

Protests and marches continued for several years in Lisbon with public protests down the Avenida da Liberdade, in front of the Portuguese Parliament, and in several key public *praças* (squares), as well as in cities throughout the country. The protests urged government action to solve high unemployment and other problems of inequality exacerbated by the crisis. Later protests dissented against the Portuguese government's acceptance of draconian anti-austerity measures raising taxes and cutting salaries to bring down debt required by the IMF (International Monetary Fund), the European Commission, and the European Central Bank, as conditions for the country to receive a financial bailout to avoid insolvency.

As mentioned in the opening vignette of this chapter, among the many alternative cultural associations and bands participating in the protests over these years was the Farra Fanfarra Associação Cultural. The band had for years collaborated with leaders of civil society associations organizing progressive activist causes—including performances at cultura popular parades and arraial-style protests like civic association-sponsored marijuana legalization marches, antigentrification efforts, anti-imperialism actions, pro-peace rallies, environmental causes, and HIV awareness/condom distribution drives. Aware of Farra Fanfarra Cultural Association's collaboration in previous protests, the citizens' committee organizing the anti-austerity action on March 12, 2013, asked association musicians to lead the march down the Avenida de Liberdade. During the parade, the association-assembled band repeatedly performed a Romani-rumba inspired version of Zeca Afonso's "Grândola, Vila Morena," a song performed by these musicians at numerous other political manifestations.[5] As the band marched, Stefano, Farra Fanfarra's *animador*,[6] crowed into his megaphone, leading the crowd in the chant "O povo unido jamais será vencido" (the people united will never be defeated). The phrase has been a *cri de coeur* in Portugal since the 1974 revolution, when it was popularized in a song by Luís Cília (based on the Chilean anthem by Quilapayún). As with other protest marches, images and videos of the band accompanied print and television news reports about the cause, also circulating virally on social media platforms.[7]

Protest vocabularies drawing on the revolutionary period went beyond the ubiquitous performances of the protest anthem "Grândola, Vila Morena" and included the repurposing of symbols of the earlier revolutionary generation to reach a broader audience. For example, the Homens da Luta, a popular satirical band emerging from performances at the protests, adopted the posture,

dress, and musical style of mythical figures and archetypes from the 1974 revolution. Parodying Zeca Afonso and leftist protest singers, the Capitães de Abril (Captains of April), and *saloio* culture,[8] the representations conferred the band with the cultural wherewithal to speak with a popular voice in the exigency of the moment. As part of their shtick, the band chanted "Carvalhesa"—the ubiquitous earworm that plays constantly through loudspeakers during the Festa do Avante!. Homens da Luta was a key presence at protest marches, providing comic relief while launching a serious call to arms in the cause against the government response. Their song "A Luta é Alegria" (The struggle is joy) swept to victory in Portugal's national Festival da Canção (Festival of Song) contest, uniting generations in a revolutionary spirit and representing the country at the 2011 Eurovision Song Contest. The Homens da Luta performances, like those of alternative brass bands, repurposed traditional forms of cultural expression, reinventing them for contemporary contexts while relying on their power as markers of traditional Portuguese culture. These performative vocabularies transcend the traditional forms in which they are embedded and give significance and power to protesters.

Conclusions

In the face of economic rupture such as that of the 2011 financial crisis, traditional cultural forms are often activated by right-wing or reactionary populists. Yet, the cases presented in this chapter demonstrate how popular culture, or cultura popular in Portugal, can play a key role in the framing and achievement of progressive activists' political aims. These creative aesthetic and structural changes occur not by rejecting but by adapting older forms to meet progressive circumstances, refashioning ritualized cultural behavior and creating space for institutional practices to remain relevant. This development has become even more important given the political and cultural role of associations in broader EU-era integration efforts (Lahusen 2006).

This protest model demonstrates how effective political activism can rely on protest vocabularies that have evolved within existing cultural institutions to create sonic spaces that support rather than challenge long-standing popular culture ritual complexes and social institutions. This exploration of festive behavior and political resistance in Portugal has shown the following: (1) Popular parade, village festa/arraial forms, and other popular cultural performances have been adapted as part of progressive political activist projects. (2) They have served to celebrate difference and forge creative adaptations of

global musical styles to support progressive causes. (3) They have enabled local communities to be persuaded in a frame that conciliates new cultural practices and political configurations without increasing tension over how older lifeways are threatened or diminished. (4) These performative protest vocabularies involve more than mere public presentations and are situated in traditional ritual complexes organized by community-based associative institutions. As a result, activism in the context of festive behavior undertaken by these respected local organizations provides a means to communicate progressive content effectively. (5) This overall argument expands notions of what constitutes festival activism to incorporate a broader complex of cultural production in the service of political aims.

The community-based roles and related social capital of older musical and cultural societies adopted by the newer associations have been central to engaging the public. Alternative brass bands' adherence to expectations of popular cultural expression, which adapt musical vocabularies and performative frames for progressive ends, magnifies their persuasive potential. The performances of alternative musical organizations help activist events advocate for social change, representing a traditional albeit subverted cultural form. This kind of syncretized and integrated performance has allowed contemporary performance groups in Portugal to reinvigorate and bolster older lifeways and festival practices with newer practices of social and political engagement.

Notes

1. I have conducted anthropological fieldwork with dozens of *fanfarras* (alternative brass bands) and Portuguese *filarmónica* bands over a period of almost twenty years as a member of the Farra Fanfarra Associação Cultural. I have played with brass bands at protest marches, activist festivals, and political events in Portugal and the EU.

2. Although Gilman (2017) relies on a more polysemous interpretation of Malawi's Umthetho Cultural Festival in her analysis of this theme, the overall point that festivals celebrating "traditional culture" can be useful in assisting marginalized or oppressed populations to negotiate power hierarchies is consistent with this analysis of Portuguese festivals (see Holton 2005; Futrell, Simi, and Gottschalk 2006; Borgonovo 2017).

3. A partial, undated list of performers: Os Artistas da Festa. Festa do Avante!, Partido Comunista Português (PCP), accessed March 23, 2025, https://www.pcp.pt/actpol/temas/f-avante/festa/artistas.htm.

4. Festa de Diversidade, *Lisbon Cultural Agenda*, 2022, accessed March 22, 2025, https://www.agendalx.pt/events/event/festa-da-diversidade/.

5. Bruno Massas, "manif.02/03/13," Facebook, March 2, 2013, https://www.facebook.com/bruno.massas/videos/465827485001 2/.

6. An MC or front person in Portuguese *palhaçaria* (clown art presentation).

7. "Iedereen omhelst nu de 'wegwerpgeneratie'" [Everyone is now embracing the 'disposable generation'], *NRC Handelsblad* (Amsterdam), March 28, 2011: 11; "Portugal Protests against Austerity," *BBC News Europe*, March 2, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21644385; "Eurozone Crisis: Portugal Protests against Austerity," *BBC News World Europe*, March 2, 2013, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21643853; "Big Protest against Austerity in Lisbon, Portugal," *CNN* iReport, March 3, 2013.

8. The Captains of April were a group of military officers who broke ranks with the Estado Novo, responsible for carrying out the coup. *Saloio* culture is a style of dress, gastronomy, and lifeways associated with rural Portugal (often caricatured as backward).

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